

THE SSA NEWS

DIRECTOR'S CORNER by Angelo Doti

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Coming Soon!

- United Way Leadership Breakfast, October 9, 2003
- Columbus Day, October 13, 2003
- United Way Kick-Off Rally, October 15, 2003

At the time of our last communication, we were discussing the latest read on the budget placed before the Governor. The Governor did sign that budget and we fared surprisingly well considering the state of the economy. So, at this point, we are now sifting through the many allocation letters we receive from the state covering all facets of our

agency operations. This is the time where counties use their influence to convince the state to make favorable adjustments to individual counties (equity adjustments) or to counties as a whole (incorrect premise assumptions). If this sounds like bartering at some street fair or garage sale, you are probably correct. Just picture it on a multimillion dollar scale.

Our intent is to obtain approval to gain an exception from the hiring freeze and fill some critical positions as state funding allows. Priority would be given to assignments that directly carry out our Business Plan's goals. Let's all hope that this relief becomes possible as we rapidly approach yet another State Budget cycle.

Celebrating Our Successes

By Diane Holden and Debra Buehring

On August 1, 2003, the Orange County Board of Supervisors declared August 2003, "Eligibility Professionals Recognition Month." Eligibility Professionals include Eligibility Technicians, Employment and Eligibility Specialists, Social Workers, Eligibility Supervisors, Social Services Supervisors, as well as all levels of office support and management.



ET's do a wonderful job on their food stamp surveys!
From left to right: Tan Nguyen (FSS/WRC), My Phung Nguyen (FSS/WRC), Valerie Dinh (FSS/WRC), Darek Garstka (FSS/ARC), Christina Dudoit (ASAP/SARC) and Linda Kitto (ASAP/SARC).



Patsy Calvert, Director of FSS, welcomes Eligibility Technicians to event.



Cake at ET celebration reads, "You're the Best!"

In celebration of the event, SSA hosted a recognition ceremony on August 28, 2003. Representatives from each division were selected to attend on behalf of their peers. During the ceremony, Eligibility Professionals throughout SSA were acknowledged for their perseverance, hard work and their continued dedication to serving our clients in a professional and caring manner. Additionally, six Eligibility Professionals received special recognition for their successes relating to Food Stamp Accuracy. Please join us in a special "thank you" for our Eligibility Professionals who continue to give of themselves in an effort to assist those in need.

"We will have to continue to focus on Food Stamp accuracy in order to bring the cumulative rate below the Federal tolerance level."

"New website, (www.sucorte.ca.gov) will help Spanish-speaking residents navigate the legal system on their own."

Understanding Food Stamp Accuracy and Error Rates

Submitted by Ingrid Harita and Patsy Calvert

The following article was originally published in the "SARC Chronicle" Summer 2003 issue which is posted on the Intranet. The data has been updated and it is being reprinted courtesy of the author, Lauren Singletary, a trainer at TCD, and Executive Editor of the SARC Chronicle, Pauline Notch.

8.29%, 8.03%, 6.54%... When you hear these numbers being tossed around in relation to the Food Stamp error rate that we are supposed to be "getting down", what on earth does it really mean? The April error rate is 6.54%, but the cumulative error rate is 8.03%, and the Federal tolerance level is down to 6.60% (and will continue to go down as long as other Counties and States keep lowering *their* Food Stamp error rates.) What do all these words really mean to us? Okay, let's give this a go:

- The **Food Stamp error rate** is 6.54% for April 2003, which represents the percentage of Food Stamps that were issued to clients incorrectly in that month.
- Our **cumulative error rate** is 8.03%. this is the average of all our monthly error rates during the Federal Fiscal Year period from October through September. So far, our cumulative rate only includes the data from October 2002 through April 2003, so there's still time between now and September to "get it down"
- The estimated **Federal tolerance level** (this is the Big Kahuna!) is currently at 6.60%. This is expected to go down each month through September. The Federal tolerance level is actually an average of all the states' cumulative error rates calculated by the Federal Government once per Federal Fiscal year. This is the number each state is compared with to determine if it is subject to a fiscal sanction.

Bottom line: Even though we had an error rate of 6.54% for April, which is below the 6.60% estimated Federal tolerance level, that doesn't keep us out of trouble. Our cumulative error rate of 8.03% is still too high! We will have to continue to focus on Food Stamp accuracy in order to bring the cumulative rate below the Federal tolerance level. Hang in there. Together we can do this!!

Resource Corner

Spanish Language Edition of the California Courts On-line Help Center Gets Rave Reviews!

Bonnie Hough, Supervising Attorney for the Center for Families, Children and the Court (part of the Judicial Council of California), would like to inform staff and the public about a new on-line resource for Spanish-speaking Californians. Centro de Ayuda de las Cortes de California, the new Spanish-language edition of the popular California Courts On-line Self-Help Center, is getting good reviews from legal service providers and the media. The San Jose Mercury News recently reported, "California's judicial leaders have come up with a new website to help knock down the language barrier for thousands of Spanish-speaking residents who each year try to navigate the legal system on their own." The new website can be accessed at: www.sucorte.ca.gov. The site provides Spanish speakers with over 900 user-friendly pages of information about the law and court procedures, tools, resources and links to free and low-cost legal help. For questions or comments about the website, please contact Bonnie Hough at (415) 865-7668.

In Memory of Susan Bagarry

By Linda Lovell, Adult Services and Assistance Programs, Anaheim Regional Centre

Many of us in the SSA family learned last week that we had lost a beloved colleague and friend. Susan Bagarry passed away on September 2nd following a lengthy illness. At the time of her retirement, (approximately five years ago) Susan was the Adult Services and Assistance Programs District Manager at Anaheim Regional Centre.

I have a treasure trove of memories from the years that I worked with Susan. She was a wonderful role model who

inspired everyone around her to give their best because we saw her give her best, day in and day out. She was warm and compassionate and had a smile and friendly greeting for all who came her way. Susan could easily have had a second career as a writer. She was without a doubt the best storyteller I've ever known. Oh, how she could make us laugh – the kind of laughter that had tears rolling down your cheeks and your sides aching!

Susan was devoted to her husband Alex, and after her retirement they fulfilled their dream of moving to Washington State. She loved her home which was surrounded by woods and spent countless hours observing the beauty of nature.

Susan touched many lives during her long association with SSA. I will always be grateful that one of them was mine.

"She was a wonderful role model who inspired everyone around her to give their best..."

Enriching Lives Together

The Orange County United Way campaign runs October 6 to November 7, 2003. The theme is "Enriching Lives Together" and the campaign goal is to increase employee pledge form contribution. More information will follow with the September 26, 2003 paychecks.

Upcoming events include:

- Leadership Breakfast, \$20.00 on October 9, 2003 at 7:00 a.m.*
*Call Mona Gustafson @ 714-245-6288 for ticket information.
- Kick-off Rally @ Civic Center, October 15, 2003 at 11:30 a.m.

"County-wide Kickoff, October 15, 2003."

Sassy Brats Win First Place

On August 22, the 10th floor at 888 North Main was unusually quiet due to the absence of the five Director's secretaries. After three months of Thursday night bowling with the OCEA League, Barbara McClure, Bunny Lynch, Jill Borel, Cheryl Iseri and Kathy Clark took to Las Vegas to compete in the final tournament of the summer season. It was a successful trip with the "Sassy Brats" taking First Place in Team Overall, Bunny Lynch taking Ladies High Game Scratch, and Cheryl Iseri taking two Ladies High Games with Handicap. It was a grand weekend for all!



From back, left to right: Barb McClure, Bunny Lynch and Jill Borel. Front row: Cheryl Iseri and Kathy Clark.

We welcome your input regarding this newsletter. For information on submitting articles, contact Debbie Kroner at (714) 541-7734
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Visit our web site
[www. oc.ca.gov/ssa/](http://www.oc.ca.gov/ssa/)



- * Articles for the October issue of The SSA NEWS are due by October 6, 2003!
- * Please limit your articles to 225 words maximum and send them via email. Thanks.



KUDOS

Mario Morales, Office Assistant, Adult Services and Assistance Programs: "Please accept our warmest thanks for hosting the August 21, 2003 blood drive and supporting the American Red Cross in our mission to fulfill the needs of the American people. We truly appreciate the support of groups like yours to help us in this endeavor. Due in large part to the efforts of your blood drive coordinator, Mario Morales, we were able to collect 50 pints of lifesaving blood, which will make a vital difference for over 150 patients. Once again, thank you so much for your support." (Based on a letter sent to Social Services Agency Director Ang Doti from Molly Bounds, Donor Recruitment Representative, American Red Cross.)

Daniel Whitehurst, Senior Social Worker, Children and Family Services/Special Programs, Integrated Continuing Services: "We are writing this letter to express our gratitude for the services your department has provided us, in particular our social worker, Daniel Whitehurst. Mr. Whitehurst has been extremely helpful to us in not only implementing our case plan but in supporting our recovery from methamphetamine addiction. He has consistently presented himself in a professional manner and has maintained a friendly, caring attitude. It is clear to us that it is only with Mr. Whitehurst's assistance that we have been able to lay a foundation for our recovery that now avails us the ability to maintain a stable living environment for ourselves and our daughter. The simple fact is that without Social Services intervention in our lives and Mr. Whitehurst's dedication and persistence in handling our case, we would not be clean and sober today, nor would our daughter have the benefit of living with two healthy, caring and loving birth parents. Please be advised that you have one extraordinary employee in Mr. Whitehurst." (Based on a letter sent by a client, forwarded by John Manning, Senior Social Services Supervisor and David Kurtz, Program Manager I, Children and Family Services.)

Brenda Wilson, Senior Social Worker, Adult Protective Services: "On behalf of my husband and myself, I just wanted to tell you how grateful we are for your help in placing his mom and sister. It seemed like a hopeless situation, so you were really a lifesaver." (Based on a letter sent by a client, forwarded by Adult Protective Services Supervisor, Sharon Williams.)

Anthony Rabago, Eligibility Technician, Adult Services and Assistance Programs, General Relief/Food Stamps: "I sure appreciate Mr. Rabago for helping me out and helping me understand the program a little bit better. He sure helped relieve a lot of my stress." (based on a letter sent by a client, forwarded by Dinah Torgerson, Assistant Program Manager, Adult Services and Assistance Programs, Central Regional Office.)

Vicky Hiltbrunner, Long-Term Care Eligibility Technician, Adult Services and Assistance Programs, Medi-Cal Specialization Regional Centre: "I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for the assistance you gave me in getting my mother qualified for MediCal. We have all either heard or been involved in a situation where we have requested help from a government organization and have had nothing but problems. People like you help all of us continue to have faith in our government system. Again, I can't thank you enough for your help in navigating this process." (Based on a letter sent by a client, forwarded by Elaine Gourdin, Program Manager II, Adult Services and Assistance Programs, Medi-Cal Specialization Regional Centre.)

Nahid Vakilian, Social Worker II, Adult Protective Services, In-Home Supportive Services: "This letter is written to commend your social worker, Nahid Vakilian for her assistance in helping my aunt to receive In-Home Supportive Services. Nahid interviewed my aunt and was patient and extremely professional in explaining the program. She spoke slowly and directly, and answered my aunt's questions simply and with understanding. My aunt is of the generation where getting outside help is embarrassing, dehumanizing and humiliating. Nahid conducted the interview in such a humane and kindly manner, it gave my aunt the ability to reply to all the questions asked of her without having to feel stressed or ashamed of the position she was in. By her efforts, Nahid was able make an unpleasant experience for my aunt, a tolerable one. My aunt and I wanted you to know how we appreciate the kindness and consideration of Nahid. (Based on letter sent by a client, forwarded by Kim Anh-Tran, Social Services Supervisor I, Adult Services and Assistance Programs, In-Home Supportive Services.)